

## Memorandum

To: All U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Employees

From: (Acting) Assistant Director - Budget, Planning, and Human Resources

Subject: Transportation Subsidy Program - Participation in the CY 2002 Transit Subsidy Program

As we move into the second year of the Transportation Subsidy Program for 2002, a few changes have been made. Beginning January 1, 2002, the subsidy will increase from \$65 up to \$100 per month for mass and vanpool transportation. This benefit received by employees participating in the program is not subject to tax.

To participate in the 2002 Transportation Subsidy Program, you will be required to complete the revised [U.S. Department of the Interior's Public Transportation Subsidy Program Application](#) form. This version of the transportation subsidy application must be the only form used. Any previous versions will not be accepted. This form can be obtained from your [transportation coordinator](#), your servicing personnel office, or on the Human Resources web site, [http://hr.fws.gov/application\\_transit.pdf](http://hr.fws.gov/application_transit.pdf). A listing of transportation coordinators can also be found on the Human Resources web site at [http://hr.fws.gov/transportation\\_contacts.htm](http://hr.fws.gov/transportation_contacts.htm).

Current participants in the Transportation Subsidy Program are required to re-apply and mark their application as a "Re-Certification (2002)" applicant and submit applications by [November 15, 2001](#). Re-certification of participants will be required for each subsequent calendar year.

The subsidy distribution date for the first quarter in 2002 will be December 12, 2001. Distribution information will be announced in a later all employee message. To cancel participation in the Transportation Subsidy Program, you must send written notification to your [transportation coordinator](#) with the date to stop enrollment. The following are questions and answers regarding the Transportation Subsidy Program.

### **What is the Transportation Subsidy Program?**

This program is designed to encourage employees to use mass transit for commuting to and from work. Beginning January 1, 2002, the amount will increase up to \$100. Employees will receive the subsidy through a voucher program which is distributed through transportation coordinators.

### **Who is eligible for the Transportation Subsidy Program?**

All Service employees who incur qualifying transportation expenses are eligible to participate in this program. You must be enrolled to receive the subsidy.

### **How do I sign-up for the Transportation Subsidy Program?**

Qualified employees should fill out the [U.S. Department of the Interior's Public Transportation Subsidy Program Application](http://hr.fws.gov/application_transit.pdf) form which can be obtained through the web site, [http://hr.fws.gov/application\\_transit.pdf](http://hr.fws.gov/application_transit.pdf). Once the form is filled out, the employee must submit it to his/her supervisor who will review and certify the form and forward to the [transportation coordinator](#). After approval by the local transportation coordinator, the form must be sent to **Kimm Slayton, Service Transportation Subsidy Program Coordinator, Division of Human Resources, 1849 C St., NW, Mailstop 3458 MIB, Washington, DC 20240, no later than November 15, 2001**. Application forms for employees in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area must be forwarded directly to Kimm Slayton, Service Transportation Subsidy Program Coordinator.

### **What are qualifying transportation expenses?**

Employees who incur qualifying transportation expenses in commuting to and from work are eligible to receive a "transit pass" (i.e., fare media card) to offset actual transportation expenses. Qualifying transportation expenses include:

- < Use of mass transit facilities (subway, rail, bus, or other similar public transportation modes used in your area).
- < Use of a "Commuter Highway Vehicle" (having a seating capacity of at least 6 adults, and which is used for transporting employees to and from work for at least 80% of the mileage). Vanpools frequently satisfy the criteria for a "Commuter Highway Vehicle" while carpools do not.

### **Can I participate in the pre-tax fringe benefit program?**

This program is no longer offered as a benefit to employees.

### **How are the transit passes distributed?**

The Department has contracted with the Department of Transportation to administer the program. The transit passes will be distributed on a pre-arranged basis, such as monthly or quarterly. Your transportation coordinator will notify you when and where to pick up your voucher. You will have to show a government identification card and pick up your voucher personally.

### **Can I participate in the Transportation Subsidy Program if I carpool to work?**

There is no provision in existing statutes to reimburse employees for carpooling expenses. Employees are not eligible to participate in the subsidy program if they are in a carpool that receives a federally subsidized parking space.

**Can I participate in the Transportation Subsidy Program if I use qualifying public transportation less than 5 days per week?**

There are some employees that have an **established** commuting pattern which consists of using a vanpool and/or public transportation less than 5 days per week on a regular and recurring basis. If you have such an established commuting pattern, you are only allowed to claim transportation expenses for the days that you are using a vanpool and/or public transportation. This must be indicated on your application form and will be reviewed against your actual transportation expenses claimed. Occasional or sporadic use of public transportation does **not** qualify for participation in the program.

**Are vanpool riders eligible to participate in the Transportation Subsidy Program?**

Vanpool riders are eligible to participate provided that:

1. The vanpool vehicle meets the IRS criteria for a “Commuter Highway Vehicle” (see question on qualifying transportation expenses); and
2. The vanpool is registered with the local transportation authority and accepts transit passes as payment.

**Is the vanpool owner/operator eligible to participate in the Transportation Subsidy Program?**

No, but the vanpool owner/operator is eligible for the subsidized parking space, if such space is available by your Region/office.

**How often are transit passes distributed?**

It varies by location, and by the type of transportation subsidy program offered by the local transportation authority. Check with your transportation coordinator.

**If I am a new employee, should I wait for the next distribution period before signing up?**

You can apply for the Transportation Subsidy Program at any time, and your transit pass will be pro-rated based on when the application is processed. Please remember, however, ***that there are no retroactive provisions for this program.***

**What do I do if my location does not have a “transportation coordinator?”**

Each participating location must have a [transportation coordinator](#). If your location does not have a designated contact, call your servicing personnel office to establish one. You are encouraged to already have a volunteer for the transportation coordinator position when you contact your servicing personnel office.

### **How do I cancel my enrollment?**

To cancel enrollment, a written notice must be sent to your [transportation coordinator](#), stating the date you wish to end your participation in the program.

### **If I leave the Service, what happens to the unused fare media?**

You will be required to return the fare media to your office. If you have used more than the pro-rated amount, you will be required to reimburse the Service for the difference.

### **What is my role as a supervisor in the Transportation Subsidy Program?**

The primary responsibility of the supervisor is to serve as certifying official for employee participation in the Transportation Subsidy Program. Supervisors should familiarize themselves with the program and the criteria for employee participation and eligibility. Supervisors will receive the transportation subsidy application form from their employees to review for completeness; perform “reasonable” checks to ensure eligibility; and sign the forms to signify approval. Supervisors will also ensure that the Payroll Cost Structure Account Number is complete and accurate. Certified applications must be forwarded to the local [transportation coordinator](#).

**What is my role as a transportation coordinator?** (A listing of transportation coordinators can be found on the Human Resources web site at [http://hr.fws.gov/transportation\\_contacts.htm](http://hr.fws.gov/transportation_contacts.htm).)

The primary responsibility of the local transportation coordinator is to serve as the approving official for employee enrollment in the Transportation Subsidy Program at the local level. Local transportation coordinators will review transportation subsidy application forms for completeness. Incomplete forms will be returned to the employee. Local transportation coordinators will also review applications to ensure that applicants do not receive federally subsidized parking (if offered at the local sight) through coordination with parking coordinators as necessary. Upon approval, transportation coordinators will forward approved application forms to Kimm Slayton, Service Transportation Subsidy Program Coordinator, Division of Human Resources, 1849 C St., NW, Mailstop 3458 MIB, Washington, DC 20240.

Additionally, in implementing the program the transportation coordinator’s responsibilities are to respond to employee inquiries regarding the program (support will be provided by the Service Transportation Subsidy Program Coordinator, Kimm Slayton, in the Division of

Human Resources and through the web site <http://hr.fws.gov/transportation.htm>); in cooperation with other bureau transportation coordinators in the area, decide on the location where fare media will be distributed, the schedule for distribution, and the frequency for distribution; distribute fare media to participating employees; maintain accurate records of fare media distribution; and return all unclaimed fare media to the Department of Transportation.

Additional questions on the transportation subsidy program can be addressed to your servicing personnel office or visit the HR web site at <http://hr.fws.gov/transportation.htm>.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bonnie Schires". The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered within a light gray rectangular box.